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H.B. No. 5811

AN ACT CONCERNING BATTERY CAGES AND EGG LAYING HENS

Good morning Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the committee:

I am Keith J. Robbins, former First Selectman of Bozrah, and I am here today to speak against HB 5811, specifically section b of the bill pertaining to caging egg-laying hens in Connecticut.

The towns of Bozrah, Franklin and Lebanon and Colchester are home to the largest producer of eggs in New England: Kofkoff Farms LLC, Southern New England Egg and New England Egg Farms... all the same company.

Combined, it is estimated by the DECD, they contribute over \$160 million to the Connecticut economy, 300 plus jobs, and \$185,000 in local taxes to the Town of Bozrah. At a local level, these farms contribute numerous donations to local charitable causes from the town playscape construction to fundraiser breakfasts, just to name a few.

I bring this to your attention because, if enacted, the ending of caged laying hens will effectively force Kofkoff Egg to move their operations out of Connecticut and closing another chapter on Connecticut's already dying agricultural industry. I read each day of a worsening economy and new job cuts daily, and then in the next paragraph I read about a bill that would remove 300 jobs from Connecticut.

I am not sure of the impetus for this legislation. I am quite sure of the detrimental outcome if the legislation is enacted. We have enough problems retaining jobs in Connecticut and this legislation would effectively remove over 300 direct jobs, not to mention the thousands of indirect jobs from some of the following industries: electrical suppliers, plumbing suppliers, propane distribution, and numerous smaller and mid-sized companies who support them. The New England Railroad would also curtail their Eastern Connecticut operations which transport grain to Kofkoff's feed mill. The loss of property tax revenue to Connecticut's small towns would be disastrous in times when State aid is flat and other revenues non-existent. The trickle-down effect of the closing of these farms will be felt far and wide, not just in Connecticut, but throughout New England and along the entire East Coast.

Kofkoff Egg participates in the UEP Certified Program, a scientifically developed program for the care of their chickens. They are a valued, much needed business and a good neighbor to eastern Connecticut. With so many challenges already facing them in an environmentally conscious world, they struggle to meet the ever-increasing expenses and expectations of the people they feed, which are all a part of their every day cost of business. Two years ago this committee defeated similar detrimental legislation, I had hoped that was the end, I have no ideas why such foolish proposals are resurrected. In the fiscal time we are currently in I am quite amazed that consideration of legislation that would eliminate jobs is even being considered. We should be concentrating on prevailing wage reform, mandate reform and other things that add costs to Connecticut not something that will take money and jobs away from Connecticut.

I ask you to defeat this effort to force them out of Connecticut.
Keith J. Robbins